

The Fugitive

BY MARY RAYMOND SHIPMAN ANDREWS

IT was the morning of the crime. The rustling of the leaves of the maple-trees over the driveway was like the sound of the sea; their shadows, clean and green with the greenness of May, ran silently forward and then silently withdrew across the thick tinsure of the lawn; purple and white lilacs lay in sunlit masses down by the road. A big snow-ball bush lifted a thousand heavy white spheres, and to the mind of the murderer, as yet unstained with blood-guiltiness, a thousand tiny bells rang dimly as they dropped their soft weights again. The murderer sat alone on the broad front steps, and the crispness of her pink skirts flowed in a straight line from her waist to three times her width; russet legs and boots stood out primly below. She was in a deep reverie, and the leaves and their waving shadows, the lilacs, the snow-ball bells, had gone with her into a world where imaginative children spend more hours than grown-ups know. She had withdrawn herself into the Enchanted Forest—the still citadel where only the young, of whatever age, may go; about her was a world of wonders, as vividly real to the fresh, unwritten brain as the material world she found so new and astonishing day by day.

There, in the forest, were fairies and hobgoblins and creatures of secret, marvellous qualities, which only she herself knew. There lived the gentle Taldama, of the size of three houses, soft-hearted and sensitive, each of whose ready tears filled a bucket; there were the Kleewalliks, with the bubbling hot brains, from which one must lift the cover often to let them cool, else they boiled over and were reduced to idiocy; there played the bewitching Whangdoodle Pup, who wore overshoes, and an American flag always on his tail, and who did the most unexpected, amusing things; there reigned Renard, the dear red fox who barked in French, the

prince, the leader, the lovable, the centre of every story. It was necessary only to be left alone where it was still, and the pink-frocked figure which bore the semblance of an ordinary little girl had entered into a kingdom such as this.

There was a clang and a jar far away—the gate leading to the stable had shut heavily, and to the dreamer it was as if fairy-land were shaken. Something dark and mysterious was happening. What was that the new nurse, Anna, who had come lately to help her own old Sarah—what was it that she had told her this morning?

“Put away your needle indeed!” Anna had said, indignantly. “A nice place to put away a needle with the point sticking out of your dolly’s shoulder, so when I takes her up I plunges me thumb in, a inch deep. S’posin’ I’d ‘a’ put me head down and stuck it in me eye—s’posin’ that, just!”

“What would that do to you, Anna?” demanded the child’s awed voice.

“Do to me, is it? It ‘d ‘a’ blinded me, that’s all; or it might ‘a’ kilt me, and then youse would ‘a’ been hung for murder, maybe,” Anna wandered on, as she buttoned the pink frock, letting her imagination play.

“Hung for murder—what does that mean, Anna?” the soft little tones asked, fascinated, horrified at she knew not what.

Anna was cross this morning, and it gave her pleasure to explain. “Mean, then? Means when youse kills somebody youse is a murderer, and the judge catches youse and youse gets a rope tied around the neck, and they hangs youse by it till youse be dead.”

There were no more questions for Anna to answer; she had given food for reflection in plenty to the young imagination—food of a new sort. The child was silent through breakfast, and no one knew that she was planning, half in

shivering repulsion, half in gloating interest, what a "judge" was and how he might tie a rope around her baby throat. But the ugly thought had melted into the delight of the spring morning when she came out-of-doors, and now, as she sat alone, dreaming her accustomed hidden dreams, it was only recalled by the sudden bang of the gate across the lawn.

"Might a gentleman join this hen-party?" a voice inquired, and the Enchanted Forest and its denizens were gone in a breath.

Uncle Nigel! The two words expressed to the mind of the sightseer all that there was of best in human society. The depth and height of a little girl's adoration for a big brother are only known by those who have been little girls, and who have never, however changed in outward ways, quite gotten over it. The pink-frocked child, having no big brother, lavished an ocean of devotion, mostly silent, on the student uncle. Had the President of these United States, the King of England, the monarchs of Europe and Asia, joined in beseeching her to come one way that they might load her with distinguished honors, and had Uncle Nigel stood, tall and smiling, as she loved him, across the road, and suggested that she should take a walk with him, a doubt as to choice would not have entered her mind. At six one is whole-souled, and the overflowing affection of the whole soul of her belonged to Uncle Nigel. He sat down by her and put his arm carelessly about her, and she thrilled, but so reserved a mechanism is a child that she did not even smile.

"What are you doing here all alone, Skeesicks? Where are your dollies? And what makes you look so excited? Your face is as red as a lobster."

Uncle Nigel, pulling absent-mindedly at the thick, cropped hair which fell like a short, gold curtain about her head, suddenly stopped, and looking up from the rapture of his touch, she saw him staring down the lawn, down toward the stable. The child's gaze was caught there too, with instant interest, for in the deep grass about the building moved slowly, casually, stopping from time to time, a light top-wagon and, apparently, nothing else.

"What the dickens!" demanded the boy.

"Maybe it's fairies," a small excited voice at his side suggested, and the great chap laughed easily, with the age-wide superiority of eighteen over six.

"Come on, Skeesicks, and we'll hunt the fairies to earth," he said, and the small hand slipped into the large one blissfully, and off they went, big boy and little girl, in the radiant spring morning, over the velvet lawn, past the fragrance of the lilacs, through the gate that clanged again after them, and into the knee-deep grass of the paddock.

Nigel stopped and pointed and laughed. They had a view of the other side of the mysterious wagon now, and before it a small calico horse, white and red—a pony by rights,—buried to the girths in green-ness, plunged her head still deeper in horse ambrosia, and munched and browsed earnestly, and strayed here and there as the spirit moved her, regardless of the carriage harnessed behind, straying too as she went.

"By Jove! Somebody's horse has got loose!" The boy, swinging through the tall grass, caught the rein, with a friendly pat of reassurance on the bent stretch of red-spotted neck.

A small clean-cut head lifted, and intelligent full eyes—eyes that were given a strangely piquant expression by their thick white lashes—regarded him with calm dignity. "Good morning, sir," they seemed to say, quietly. "Is it quite etiquette to interrupt a friend by force at breakfast?"

"I beg your pardon." The young man spoke as if answering a gentle reproof. "But you oughtn't to be wandering about here alone this way, ought you?" He loosed the rein, and for answer the pony dipped her head deep again in grass.

There was a shout from the stable door, and turning, they saw a big man in shirt-sleeves, who gesticulated.

"She's all right!" he called. "All right! It's Kitty!"

"Oh!" the boy murmured. "If it's Kitty, of course that makes a difference. I wonder who Kitty is?"

"I know! I know!" the child proclaimed, in agitation. "Masters told me. It's Kitty what's Dr. Fell's horse—she's a trick-pony. Masters told me she knew just as much as a damn white person."

"Did Masters say that to you?"

"Yes, Uncle Nigel; but he said he begged my pardon, miss, for the damn, but I told him not to mind, so he didn't. And Kitty—come on, Uncle Nigel, let's go and see Dr. Fell." And eighty pounds dragged one hundred and sixty over the ground resolutely.

"Who's Dr. Fell?"

"Why, the horse-dentist, Uncle Nigel. Didn't you know?" She stopped and stared in surprise. She had had the impression, given sometimes by college students, that he knew everything. "He scrapes down their toofies when they gets long and sharp," she explained further. An investigating hand was inserted tentatively between her own lips. "Mine doesn't do 'at way—I wonder why?"

"Oh, well, I dare say he'll scrape you down a bit—I'll ask him," Uncle Nigel remarked, encouragingly. "It 'll do your toofies good." And then reflected aloud, "It was that wagon I saw drive in as I came over—banged the gate behind him with the dickens of a row."

The stable door was wide open, and a healthful, horsy smell mingled with the May breezes. The two stood hand in hand and stared silently. A large old man, of six feet two or more, stood in front of Nancy, the skittish saddle-horse, whom Masters held by the halter close to her head. A great gloved hand and a hairy forearm were thrust far up the horse's mouth, a file was going with excruciating steadiness, and the black muzzle twitched and the dark eyes rolled to this side and that in nervous protest. Dr. Fell was talking steadily—talking solely, evidently, to Nancy.

"There! there!" he murmured, soothingly. "Poppa wouldn't hurt you—poppa's just going to fix your teeth nice so they won't bother. Be a good girl and let poppa—" and at this point Nancy gave a mad plunge, out of all patience with the human race. Dr. Fell patted the tortured brown head gently. "Why, you mustn't do that," he remonstrated, speaking low, as men who know horses learn to speak. "You'll scare poppa! My! my! how you scared me!"

The two shadows in the doorway met his eye, and he turned a big, round, friendly face, with protruding, gentle eyes, towards them.

"Good morning," he said, cordially. "Good morning, madam; good morning, sir."

The word "madam" seemed to its pink-frocked object one of the pleasantest and most appropriate designations ever applied. How well it would be if father, for instance, would call her "madam" in that sensible way, instead of "baby," as was his trying custom. Even "Skeeksicks"—Uncle Nigel, looking down from the corner of his eye, saw the small person bristle with grave and satisfied dignity.

"Good mornin', Dr. Fell," the soft voice answered, with ready civility. "We saw your nice trick-pony munchin' grass with the carriage tied on."

"Did you indeed, madam?" and the doctor regarded her with flattering interest. "And did Kitty shake hands with you by chance?"

"No—can she shake hands?" The wide-eyed astonishment flattered the doctor in turn.

"Shake hands!" he repeated, as one who should say, "Can I walk!" "Shake hands! Kitty! I'm surprised, indeed, that she failed so to do. That ain't like Kitty—she's liable to be polite to the ladies." And again a glow of pleasure at being included in that stately "ladies," at this appreciation of her sterling qualities, warmed the intercostal spaces beneath the pink gingham. "I will show you," said Dr. Fell, and laid down his file, and drew off the wet, chewed gloves, and wiped his hands carefully. His manner of saying and doing things was impressive, and the young man as well as the child followed him, fascinated, as he stepped, limping—for the doctor was a veteran of the civil war,—from the stable and into the breeze-tossed grass.

The little calico horse lifted her trim head at his step before he spoke, and gazed at him, as if weighing the possible reasons of his coming, from her bright, queer eyes.

"Kitty, I'm astounded that you ain't shook hands properly with this lady," he addressed her, in quiet tones full of reproach. "Tut, tut! That ain't the way for a polite horse to act, taking advantage of me to forget your manners the minute my back is turned."

The horse blinked her white lashes at him meekly, as if condoning her fault.

"Well, then, put up your fist and shake hands with the madam, pretty,"—and a slim foreleg doubled patiently, and the child reached in solemn ecstasy and grasped it with her fingers. "Now with the gentleman, surely," and Kitty and Nigel saluted each other. Dr. Fell's broad, gentle face beamed with pride, and he patted a red splash on the white head tenderly. "Now, Kitty, make a bow for the madam—two bows—give a lady two bows always, Kitty," and the spirited, obstinate little head bobbed up and down in air twice, with as much devil-may-care defiance, to say the least, as civility in the greeting.

Fifteen minutes later, after more performances, after anecdotes told in a quaint mixture of primness and bad grammar, alive with the charm of the old man's deep-channelled, unconscious originality, the séance was ended, and the pink frock and the tall figure in tennis-clothes found themselves strolling back together again across the lawn.

"I do not love thee, Doctor Fell;
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this one thing I know full well—
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell."

Nigel remarked, casually, as they went.

"I'm sorry you don't, Uncle Nigel, but I have to love him quite much because he's so pleasant to Kitty and because he calls me madams and ladies."

There was lunch cooking as the pink frock went past the kitchen and up the back stairway to the nursery. The suggestion of steak and baked potatoes was not an unpleasant one, but the material thought was swamped in a supreme joy when she came to the room where the young Alexander, her small brother of four months, held sway. This was one of her enthusiasms, almost the greatest, this remarkable living doll which she was allowed sometimes, as the highest of honors, to hold in her arms. When Anna, left in charge, suggested a plan she caught at it eagerly.

"Would youse like to hold the baby, careful, while I runs down to see me cousin a minute? Sure I won't be gon' long," said Anna, and the child's voice trembled with pleasure as she agreed.

It was very still in the airy nursery. Her mother had gone to the city; her

father was, of course, at business; Uncle Nigel had disappeared into the big place next door, his home; only the servants and the two children were in the house, and old Sarah, the head nurse, was busy in her mother's room far down the hallway, putting away basketfuls of clean clothes. The nurse *pro tem.* was enthroned in a high-backed rocking-chair; her pink skirts stood out straight from it; her tan feet dangled, toes in. The heavy baby she held stopped the circulation in her arms, made her extremely uncomfortable—but what was comfort to bliss? It was bliss untold to feel the warm, helpless weight over her shoulder, the infinitely soft, tiny face against her own. As she rocked she sang,

"Wock-a-bye baby, in the twee top."

She crooned over and over—it was all the song she knew; and as she sang she rocked harder, more enthusiastically. The baby was sound, sound asleep, and a sense of responsibility, of importance, grew. With her whole might would she fulfil this duty, this honor thrust upon her. If singing and rocking would do it, she would keep the baby asleep, cost what it might. She sang more breathlessly, she rocked harder, her toes barely touching the floor as she gave each impulse to the chair. The chair raced forward and back ever at more frantic speed. Finally, at the very crest of action, she felt suddenly a concussion, a jar of the small head in her neck. As quickly as might be she stopped the movement, and carefully, anxiously, swung the baby about until he lay in her lap.

The little girl's eyes dilated with horror; she gasped, shook all over with awful fear, for the wee face in her lap was spotted with a drop of blood. That the infant Alexander was still drawing the steady breath of peaceful sleep she did not notice; that she had merely bumped his nose and made it bleed she did not imagine; to her he was dead, done to death at his sister's hands. Once again Anna's words of the morning, opening a vista into unknown terrors, flashed to her mind. A murderer! She had killed the baby—she was a murderer! The awful judge would come shortly and tie a rope about her neck and hang her. Every instinct of her keen-

ly alive soul and body rose in rebellion, and the good stout stuff of which she was made prompted her instantly to fight her fate. She must escape before the judge should come; she must leave her home, run away.

With trembling care she rose and laid the blood-stained corpse—now snoring heartily—in the crib, and kissed its forehead, damp and warm with perspiration, with quivering lips. Then she looked about her, and a large tear dropped silently on either round cheek. She must leave this dear place that she loved, and father and mother and Sarah and—she sobbed—and Uncle Nigel. Her eyes fell on her doll's trunk—a box eighteen inches long by twelve high. People always took trunks on a journey; she must of course do the same, and this was the very thing. Hurriedly she went to work to pack it.

A small nightgown went in first, then a silver brush and comb—the gift of Uncle Nigel,—then, rolled together, a battered doll and a broad sash of pink ribbon, calculated to be of particular service to an escaping criminal. Then she considered. She must have at least a few relics of home, of the dear ones left behind, to remember them by in the years to come. A pair of Sarah's old shoes took the next place. A photograph of her mother stood, in a massive silver frame, on the dressing-table—that added its weight to the trunk. As for Alexander, the dear deceased, she sobbed once loudly as she crammed down with difficulty his largest woolly lamb. She could see nothing of her father's in evidence at the moment, but decided to abstract his riding-crop as she went through the hall down-stairs. There was Anna, of whom as yet she had no memorial. She hesitated a moment, for it seemed to her vaguely that it was Anna who had caused this upheaval of home and happiness; but the small torn soul would be at peace with all of her world—even Anna she would remember affectionately. Anna's best hat—a stately structure of ribbon and flowers—lay on the table. The little girl folded it together as tightly as her muscle would allow, and plugged the interstices of the woolly lamb with it. Then she searched in her own chest of drawers to see if there was anything left

which might be useful in her future life as a murderer, and selected a pair of white kid gloves and a jew's-harp.

She embowered herself, as a last rite, in the flapping, flower-loaded frame of her best hat, on whose wide brim the poppy and the daisy and the corn-flower and the buttercup and a few grasses vied for mastery—a typical little girl's hat,—and as the broad white elastic creased her fat chin, the sorrowful face it confined bloomed as yet another flower.

So, carrying the trunk in her arms, she passed for the last time through the hall of her home, her mind bent now not on the traditional farewell glances, but on the possibility of reaching her father's crop, the one souvenir needed to complete her collection. It was accomplished, and with that slippery addition to her load she was off.

The place was on the very edge of the country; there was a small back gate which led through a shady lane into a highway, and this was an exit in the spirit of her adventure. There was no one in sight, and she trotted down the glare of the sunny road bravely, though at times she was forced to lay down the doll's trunk to rest her aching fist and to get a fresh and stronger hold of it.

Half a mile slipped by not unpleasantly. In spite of deathless regret, in spite of the nameless dread of the judge, there was quite an exhilaration in running away. Who knew but she might find the Enchanted Forest, and the gentle, large Taladma, and Renard, and the Fairy of the Himalayas, who would settle all her future in a wink?

Up the field, in the shade of a big maple close by a blossoming thorn-bush, she sat down to rest; and as she sat, not yet tired enough to have lost the pleasant sense of excitement in adventure, her eyes wandered half a mile back to the main road, and she saw figures. Then the horror of a hunted thing came upon her. They were on her trail; they would catch her and deliver her to the judge, who would hang her by the neck until—Ah! A shiver of terror shook her from head to foot at the thought of a hand on her throat, and then the big will braced the little muscles.

She staggered along between fence and bushes over the uneven ground as rapidly

as might be towards the woods. It was desperately hard work scrambling over the rough ground; brambles scratched delicate hands, stones bruised soft feet, and often she fell, but held always the precious irksomeness of the doll's trunk clasped to her panting heart. So, plunging along in a mad haste of fear, through, it seemed, uncounted dozens of miles, she gained peace, for suddenly the fatherly branches of trees stretched undemonstrative strong arms, as is the fatherly way, about her. The terrified, battered little lump of humanity felt instantly comforted in the power and gentleness of the woods, and at full length on the ground, with her dirty face pushed regardless into the mould of mother earth's brown skin, with the beloved burden laid aside for the first time, she sobbed her heart out gaspingly, and felt better. Never in her guarded short life had she been bruised and exhausted and roasted and frightened before. There was the hurt of injured dignity topping physical sorrows, and to crown even that, she had had no lunch. What hunger was she had not before known, and she did not recognize it in this unloved, abused sense of lonely wrong, but it played its part. Yet—listen! The branches were whispering about her; she could almost catch words of charmed meaning; there were light sounds on the earth; a twig snapped gently.

She sat up very carefully and clasped her scratched knees in her arms, and forgot life's tragedy as she stared with round eyes, her lips parted, her hearing strained for a sign of the wonderful beings who were probably at this moment close about her, for this surely must be the Enchanted Forest. A long time she sat so, motionless, hugging her knees, listening and gazing, until at length the constraint wearied her, and she rose with a patient sigh.

"I'm here," she announced, timidly, to whom it might concern. And the little voice stabbing the still air startled her.

Suddenly she was afraid of the great quiet of the waving branches, almost of these dear friends of hers who moved so mysteriously behind whispering screens of leaves, who would not meet her as she wished to meet them, in a frank and open spirit. Hurriedly, as the feeling seized

her, she lifted the trunk, and stepping cautiously, as if not to disturb the unseen, inhospitable citizens of this silent place, she slipped away. Into deeper shadows at first, then, by degrees, into a growth of smaller trees, and then, from an open meadow, back once more to the road.

She trudged along, but looking back often to see if the forces of the law were on her trail. And behold, there they were! The little figure close against the fence was not conspicuous, and she saw the bunch of people before they saw her. Under the fence she rolled, into the deep grass of the meadow, and stowed the trunk by a bush and lay quiet, staring and breathing hard. Soon she heard voices—two wagons stopped close by her, and her pumping heart gave an extra jump as she distinguished Uncle Nigel's boyish, deep tones. Uncle Nigel! To think that her best beloved should be hunting her to her death; her mouth quivered, and a long blowing grass tickled the trembling lip, and she sneezed. But her father's big voice drowned the sound.

"Nigel!" he called, "I'll take the right at this turning, and you can go on up the Greenville Road for about a mile more. She can't have gone farther than that. If we don't find her by six, we had better meet at home and"—the murderer did not know that her father choked here—"and I'll see again if there are any traces near Dunstable's Pond."

The meaning of that, the agony of anxiety, did not at all reach the small person in ambush who listened, but she knew that they were going up the two roads whose parting was close beyond. She waited until they were out of hearing, and then she crept forth and took up her weary way, tired, spiritless, hungry, but yet with dogged determination left. On and on she trudged, too tired to think or care much what the end of this weary escape might be, and twice the trunk fell from her weakening grasp and scattered the plunder, and she cried a little as she repacked. Finally she sat down on it, with her back against a tree.

"I think perhaps I'd rather be hanged," she considered.

But a thickening dust rose in the distance, and she slipped swiftly behind a big rock—a farmer's vehicle, a possible emissary of justice, and the

love of life in her proved still active. Twilight came over purpling hills as she dragged her feet across a field, for now and then she had left the roads by caprice, by a sudden fancy for the grassy stretches, and it was this lack of design in her itinerary which had foiled her pursuers. Utterly worn out, she lay down at the farther edge of the ten-acre lot and fell fast asleep, and might so have slept until morning had not the clean, quick trot of a horse, the rolling of light wheels, awakened her.

She sat up bewildered, calling "Anna" at the top of her lungs. The wheels stopped, there was silence for a moment, but no further sound came, and the horse started off smartly.

The murderer stood up and watched. It was night, perhaps eight o'clock of a May evening; she could see the dark bulk flying up the road; she saw it turn in, about a quarter of a mile beyond, and then a light shone out, and its beams meant humanity. She could not lead this lonely, hunted life longer—it seemed years she had been at it. The light would lead her into the hands of law and justice, but also into the hands of her mother and father. Perhaps, it might be barely possible, they would forgive her, would somehow save her from the judge. At all events it would be pleasant to have supper and to be undressed and go to bed, and if they hanged her in the morning—well, that would not be till morning.

A big man was walking about the stable from which the light had flashed, carrying his lantern here and there with a halting step as he unharnessed and cared for his horse—a small calico horse, white and red. Out of the black shadows which lay sharply against orange lights came a voice, weak and small, which startled the man into stillness.

"Please take me home and let them hang me," the voice said, and the man turned and stared, bewildered.

From the outer darkness crept a figure and stopped. The yellow beams swung, and shone on a limp and soiled pink frock, on russet stockings torn and hanging, on a face where dirt and tears had mixed freely, and on thick gold hair in wild disorder. Projecting into the foreground a large doll's trunk caught the eye, from whose mouth issued abruptly

what seemed the leg of an animal. It took Dr. Fell a long minute to recognize the apparition. Then he set down the lantern swiftly.

"Why, it's the madam!" he cried. "What in the world are you doing here, my lady?" And healing was in the voice and in the words.

"Oh, Dr. Fell!" the murderer exclaimed, joyfully, and dropped the trunk, and never cared that the woolly lamb and its mates went bounding over the stable floor, and found herself weeping miserably, joyfully, on the doctor's broad shoulder, while his voice repeated over and over, as he patted her back: "There! there now! There, there, now!" There was little variety to the remark, but it satisfied her.

After that came a hazy dream, from which issued, in her memory, certain salient points. First she saw as in a vision the wonderful Kitty hastily unharnessed and given a drink, and then she felt herself lifted up, far up in massive arms, and carried, a broken reed, a willing baby, into the house. There Dr. Fell, an old bachelor, living alone, lighted lamps, cooked, set before her, as if before a queen, a royal meal in less, as she remembered it, than five minutes. And while he cooked, and while she ate, he entertained her with stories of Kitty, and in the happiness of steak and potatoes and cool milk her courage came back in a flood, and the contraband feeling of the occasion gave that delicious flavor to the meal which only a sense of the contraband can give, and dimples played on the small grimy face and laughter bubbled up light-heartedly.

"So you see, madam," the doctor explained, confidentially, as horseman to horseman, "they couldn't none of them do nothing, nowise, with Kitty. Every particular time they would harness her, down she would lay in the harness, and beatin' wouldn't budge her. You'd be surprised, madam, how they beat that little horse. It was wrong; it was very wrong. But I'd had my eye on her, and I'd made up my mind she warn't bad, only she were a nervous girl and high-spirited, and beatin' warn't no good. Anyways, I was obliged to get her out of them men's hands. So I paid sixty-five dollars down—consider that, madam—only sixty-five dollars for Kitty."

"That was awfully cheap," the little sleepy voice responded, with the air of a connoisseur in horses.

"Cheap! I believe you!" and the doctor shook his head sidewise solemnly, and the murderer shook hers sidewise too. "So," he continued, "I bought her—for sixty-five dollars—remember that."

"I will," the murderer promised, earnestly, arresting a batch of fried potatoes on its way to her open mouth.

"And then—what next?"

The murderer felt that she ought to know, but she didn't. She humbly waited.

"To drive her—that was the proposition—and you'll say it was a large one, will you not, madam?"

"Yes, I will," assented the murderer, eagerly; that was easy.

"Well, then, I says to Kitty—explaining to her after a manner, do you see?—I says, 'Kitty, my lady, poppa ain't going to hurt you the least mite, so now don't you be rambunctious and scare poppa into fits; just be harnessed quiet and pleasant, like a good girl,'—and what do you think happened?"

"She didn't scare you into fits," ventured the little girl, entranced with this constant appeal to her intelligence.

"Ex-actly—exactly what Kitty didn't do," and the old man slapped the table so that the fried potatoes jumped, and a deep sense of satisfaction permeated the murderer. "I see you understand Kitty. Well, I harnessed her and I gets into the phaeton, quiet and ca'm, and I says, says I, 'Get up.' And what do you think Kitty did?"

"She got up," answered the murderer confidently—too confidently.

"No," said the doctor, gravely, shaking his great head again,—"no; you're wrong." But his manner of saying it was almost as flattering as his former agreement. It was equal taking issue with equal on a great question. "You're wrong there, madam. Kitty stood still. What's more, she laid her ears back. Did you ever see Kitty lay her ears back, madam?"

"I—I think not, but I'd like to," the little voice answered.

"It's a sight," said the doctor, "a remarkable sight. They have a world of meaning, have Kitty's ears. Well, she

waggled them ears back at me, as if she was saying, in plain English, 'Until you fix what's wrong I don't stir a step!' That's what she said, plain as talking. So I looks around, naturally, to see what's wrong. And I see the whip setting in the socket, just where them bright eyes o' Kitty's could spy it. So out I gets and takes the whip, in an ostentatious manner of doing it, and lays it one side on the floor. Then in I gets again, and picks up the reins, and out goes Kitty as sweet as a May morning; and from that day to this, madam, if you'll believe it, not a mite of trouble have I ever had with that horse—that horse which had the reputation to be the worst-tempered animal in the country. A wonderful beast she is, a wonderful beast—if a beast, which I sometimes doubt."

A wanderer stopping to gaze in at the window of the small house would have lingered to see, on either side of a white-spread, lamplighted table, a pretty child whose dirt-streaked features beamed with happiness, and a large, kindly old man whose broad face and prominent pale eyes shone with no less of pleasure.

To the flowing accompaniment of the doctor's conversation a mountain of beef-steak and potatoes had disappeared, and, fed and warmed, and happy in this delightful social function, the murderer lifted innocent eyes in surprise to see him suddenly get up.

"And now," he said, in the pleasant, gentle tones which children and animals loved and trusted,—“now if the madam has had a sufficiency of everything, I rather guess Kitty and I had better take her home. I rather guess momma and poppa 'll be worrying a mite when they don't know where little girls be this time o' night."

At the words a pitiless horizon closed once more upon the fugitive. The glow faded from the happy, dirty face, and her mouth worked. "Couldn't I stay here?" she suggested, piteously. "I'd sleep with Kitty if there wasn't room in this house. I—I don't want to be ha-anged."

With a world of delicate patience he drew the story from her—the story of the crime,—and very quietly when it was told he reassured her. "Why, madam, do you know, I think you're wrong," he

reasoned. "I think you ain't used your customary good judgment to run away before you knew you was a murderer. My opinion is, if you ask it, that you ain't never killed Alexander yet. As I sense the affair, you bumped his nose and gave him a good, smart nose-bleed, and that's all. I'd be willing to warrant it, madam,—I'd be willing to warrant that there baby's been bouncing about, crowing, all this livelong afternoon you've been running away. Tut—tut! never cry now, the plucky little lady that you are—tut—tut! There now, leave your head lay, and no judge nor nothing sha'n't get you while I'm alive." And, her tumbled hair against the mighty shoulders which smelled undeniably of the stable, she let the big arms fold about her, and sobbed comfortably.

It needed but a little more gentle reasoning to persuade her to return, and, so sleepy that she could hardly stagger, it was yet rapture and excitement to go out hand in hand with the doctor to the dark stable and help seriously and responsibly to harness. The doll's trunk was, with a right sense of its dignity, roped on behind. It was a regal moment when she was tucked into the phaeton, wrapped in a carriage-rug, and Dr. Fell, getting in beside her, lifted the reins and started the great and only Kitty down the road for her—the murderer's—journey to her own again. The doctor's cheerful voice kept steadily on as Kitty's quick feet rang musically.

"You ain't going to sleep, be you, madam?" he asked, a trifle anxiously. "Better not drop off till we get you home now—might ketch cold," and he shifted the reins to one hand, and slipped his great arm tenderly around the slim bundle in the rug. "So many little gals in the world," he meditated, in an absent-minded way; "seems a pity I couldn't have one."

Far down the black road a light flashed, was gone, had come again. Soon there was the distant sound of wheels and rapid hoof-beats.

"If I don't mistake the situation, that there is a search-party looking for the most val'able little girl on earth," remark-

ed Dr. Fell, and the theory proved tenable. It was, in fact, the central one of a dozen search-parties then out. Dr. Fell hailed the light an eighth of a mile away, and the voice that answered him was shrill with anxiety—the voice of the murderer's father.

"I've got her—she's all right," the big man's big notes boomed out on the night, and the two—Nigel was also in the wagon—knew, at those words of beatitude, for one reeling moment, what it might be to faint from joy.

A lonely man that night, as he limped about his stable and carefully fed and put to bed the small horse that was all of his family, went over and over again an episode which occurred when the child's father, grim with thankfulness, came to lift her from the phaeton. As she realized, out of the border-land of a swimming world of sleep, that she was being taken from the friend of her adversity, her arms flashed out of the mummylike rug swathings, and Dr. Fell, with a thrill through his heart, felt them clasp him, while a sweet, dirty face was pressed against his, and a fresh mouth kissed his cheek.

"I don't care if Uncle Nigel loves you or not; I love you—I love you," she whispered, and the tight clasp had to be unfastened by force to get her away.

Hardly could the doctor sleep that night for the memory of the touch which seemed to catch him over and over for hours after.

"Let me carry her into the house," begged Nigel, and the returning criminal opened her weighted lids, as the hall light fell on them, to blink from her mother's face, racked but radiant, to that of the beloved uncle, and to know dimly that, after cycles of misery, all was again well with the world. Her mental grip was uncertain, and the good things that had crowded suddenly upon her, mingled, jumbled together.

"I—I think Kitty roped the trunk," the murderer whispered, drowsily, and smiled at her mother. "Knows just as much as—as a damn white person," she murmured.

